



REKADY AT OR DOC SITH
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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RUBÁIYÁT OF DOC SIFERS
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Other Books by
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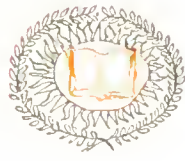
POEMS HERE AT HOME.
NEIGHBORLY POEMS.
SKETCHES IN PROSE AND
OCCASIONAL VERSES.
AFTERWHILES.
PIPES O' PAN (*Prose and
Verse*).
RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD.
FLYING ISLANDS OF THE
NIGHT.
OLD-FASHIONED ROSES
(*English Edition*).
GREEN FIELDS AND RUN-
NING BROOKS.
ARMAZINDY.
A CHILD-WORLD.
AN OLD SWEETHEART OF
MINE.



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RUBÁIYÁT OF DOC SIFERS
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

ILLUSTRATED
BY
C. M. RELYEA



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TO

DR. FRANKLIN W. HAYS

THE LOYAL CHUM OF MY LATEST YOUTH
AND LIKE FRIEND AND COMRADE STILL
WITH ALL GRATEFUL AFFECTION OF

THE AUTHOR.

WE FOUND him in that Far-away that yet to us
 seems near —
 We vagrants of but yesterday when idlest youth
 was here, —
 When lightest song and laziest mirth possessed us
 through and through,
 And all the dreamy summer-earth seemed drugged
 with morning dew :

When our ambition scarce had shot a stalk or
 blade indeed :
 Yours,—choked as in the garden-spot you still
 deferred to "weed" :
 Mine,—but a pipe half-cleared of pith—as now
 it flats and whines
 In sympathetic cadence with a hiccough in the
 lines.

Aye, even then—O timely hour!—the High Gods
 did confer
 In our behalf:—And, clothed in power, lo, came
 their Courier—
 Not winged with flame nor shod with wind,—
 but ambling down the pike,
 Horseback, with saddlebags behind, and guise all
 human-like.

*And it was given us to see, beneath his rustic
riid,
A native force and mastery of such inspiring
kind,
That half unconsciously we made obeisance.—
Smiling, thus
His soul shone from his eyes and laid its glory
over us.*

*Though, faring still that Far-away that yet to
us seems near,
His form, through mists of yesterday, fades from
the vision here,
Forever as he rides, it is in retinue divine,—
The hearts of all his time are his, with your hale
heart and mine.*



RUBÁIYÁT OF DOC SIFERS
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



RUBÁIYÁT
OF
DOC SIFERS

I

EF you don't know DOC SIFERS I 'll jes argy,
here and now,
You 've bin a mighty little while about here,
anyhow!
'Cause Doc he 's rid these roads and woods —
er *swum* 'em, now and then —
And practised in this neighborhood sence hain't
no tellin' when!

II

In radius o' fifteen mile'd, all p'int's o' compass round,
No man er woman, chick er child, er team, on top o' ground,
But knows *him*—yes, and got respects and likin' fer him, too,
Fer all his so-to-speak dee-fects o' genius showin' through!

III

Some claims he 's absent-minded; some has said they wuz afeard
To take his powders when he come and dosed 'em out, and 'peared
To have his mind on somepin' else—like County Ditch, er some
New way o' tannin' mussrat-pelts, er makin' butter come.



IV

He 's cur'ous— they hain't no mistake about
it!— but he 's got

Enough o' extry brains to make a *jury*— like
as not.

They 's no *describin'* Sifers,— fer, when all is
said and done,

He 's jes *hisse'f Doc Sifers*— ner they hain't
no other one!

V

Doc 's allus sociable, polite, and 'greeable, you-
'll find—

Pervidin' ef you strike him right and nothin'
on his mind,—

Like in some *hurry*, when they 've sent fer
Sifers *quick*, you see,

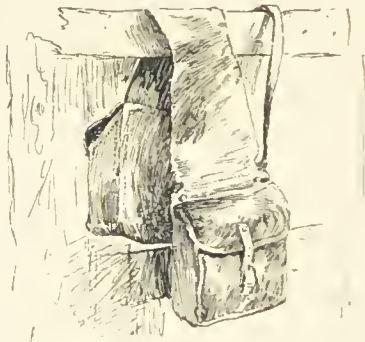
To 'tend some sawmill-accident, er picnic jam-
boree;

VI

Er when the lightnin' 's struck some hare-
brained harvest-hand; er in
Some 'tempt o' suicidin'—where they 'd ort
to try ag'in!

I 've *knowed* Doc haul up from a trot and
talk a' hour er two

When raily he 'd a-ort o' not a-stopped fer
“*Howdy-do!*”





VII

And then, I 've met him 'long the road, a-
 lopin',—starin' straight
Ahead,—and yit he never knowed me when
 I hollered "*Yate,*
Old Saddlebags!" all hearty-like, er "*Who*
 you goin' to kill?"
And he 'd say nothin'—only hike on faster,
 starin' still!

VIII

I 'd bin insulted, many a time, ef I jes wuz n't
 shore
Doc did n't mean a thing. And I 'm not
 tetchy any more
Sence that-air day, ef he 'd a-jes a-stopped to
 jaw with *me*,
They 'd bin a little dorter less in my own
 fambily!

IX

Times *now*, at home, when Sifers' name comes
up, I jes *let on*,
You know, 'at I think Doc 's to *blame*, the
way he 's bin and gone
And disapp'inted folks—'Ll-jee-mun-*nec!* you 'd
ort to then
Jes hear my wife light into me—"ongrateful-
est o' men!"





X

'Mongst *all* the women—mild er rough, splen-
differous er plain,
Er them *with* sense, er not enough to come in
out the rain,—
Jes ever' shape and build and style o' women,
fat er slim—
They all like Doc, and got a smile and plea-
sant word fer *him!*

XI

Ner hain't no horse I 've ever saw but what 'll
neigh and try
To sidle up to him, and paw, and sense him,
ear-and-eye:
Then jes a tetch o' Doc's old pa'm, to pat 'em,
er to shove
Along their nose—and they 're as ca'm as
any cooin' dove!

XII

And same with *dogs*,—take any breed, er
strain, er pedigree,
Er racial caste 'at can't concede no use fer
you er me,—
They 'll putt all predju-dice aside in *Doc's* case
and go in
Kahoots with him, as satisfied as he wuz kith-
and-kin !

XIII

And Doc 's a wonder, trainin' pets!—He 's
got a chicken-hawk,
In kind o' half-cage, where he sets out in the
gyarden-walk,
And got that wild bird trained so tame, he 'll
loose him, and he 'll fly
Clean to the woods!—Doc calls his name—
and he 'll come, by-and-by!



XIV

Some says no money down ud buy that bird
 o' Doc.—Ner no
 Inducement to the *bird*, says I, 'at *he 'd* let
Sifers go!
 And Doc *he* say 'at *he 's* content—long as
 a bird o' prey
 Kin 'bide *him*, it 's a *compliment*, and takes
 it thataway.

XV

But, gittin' back to *docterin'*—all the sick and
 in distress,
 And old and pore, and weak and small, and
 lone and motherless,—
 I jes tell *you* I 'preciate the man 'at 's got
 the love
 To "go ye forth and ministrare!" as Scriptur'
 tells us of.

XVI

Dull times, Doc jes *mianders* round, in that old
rig o' his:
And hain't no tellin' where he 's bound ner
guessin' where he is;
He 'll drive, they tell, jes thataway fer maybe
six er eight
Days at a stretch; and neighbors say he 's
bin clean round the State.

XVII

He picked a' old tramp up, one trip, 'bout
eighty mile'd from here,
And fetched him home and k-yored his hip,
and kep' him 'bout a year;
And feller said—in all *his* ja'nts round this
terreschul ball
'At no man wuz a *circumstance* to *Doc!*—he
topped 'em all!—



XVIII

Said, bark o' trees 's a' open book to Doc, and
 vines and moss
 He read like writin' — with a look knowed ever'
 dot and cross:
 Said, stars at night wuz jes as good 's a com-
 pass: said, he s'pose
 You could n't lose Doc in the woods the
 darkest night that blows!

XIX

Said, Doc 'll tell you, purty clos't, by under-
 bresh and plants,
 How fur off *warter* is,—and 'most perdict the
 sort o' chance
 You 'll have o' findin' *fish*; and how they 're
 liable to *bite*,
 And whether they 're a-bitin' now, er only
 after night.

XX

And, whilse we 're talkin' *fish*,—I mind they
formed a fishin'-crowd
(When folks *could* fish 'thout gittin' *fined*, and
seinin' wuz allowed!)

O' leadin' citizens, you know, to go and seine
"Old Blue"—

But had n't no big seine, and so—w'y, what
wuz they to do? . . .

XXI

And Doc he say he thought 'at *he* could *knit*
a stitch er two—

"Bring the *materials* to me—'at 's all I 'm
astin' you!"

And down he sets—six weeks, i jing! and
knits that seine plum done—

Made corks too, brails and ever'thing—good
as a boughten one!



XXII

Doc 's *public* sperit — when the sick 's not
takin' *all* his time
And he 's got *some* fer politics — is simple yit
sublime :—
He 'll *talk* his *principles* — and they air *honest* ;—
but the sly
Friend strikes him first, election-day, he 'd
'commodate, er die !

XXIII

And yit, though Doc, as all men knows, is
square straight up and down,
That vote o' his is — well, I s'pose — the
cheapest one in town ;—
A fact 'at 's sad to verify, as could be done on
oath —
I 've voted Doc myse'f — *And I was criminal
fer both !*

XXIV

You kin corrupt the *ballot-box* — corrupt *your-*
se'f, as well —
 Corrupt *some* neighbors,—but old Doc 's as
 oncorruptible
 As Holy Writ. So putt a pin right there! —
 Let *Sifers* be,
 I jucks! he would n't vote agin his own worst
 inimy!

XXV

When Cynthy Eubanks laid so low with fever,
 and Doc Glenn
 Told Euby Cynth 'ud haf to go — they sends
 fer *Sifers* then! . . .
 Doc sized the case: "She 's starved," says
 he, "fer *warter* — yes, and *meat*!"
 The treatment 'at she 'll git from *me* 's all
 she kin drink and eat!"



XXVI

He orders Euby then to split some wood,
and take and build
A fire in kitchen-stove, and git a young spring-
chicken killed;
And jes whirled in and th'owed his hat and
coat there on the bed,
And warshed his hands and sailed in that-air
kitchen, Euby said,

XXVII

And biled that chicken-broth, and got that
dinner — all complete
And clean and crisp and good and hot as
mortal ever eat!
And Cynth and Euby both 'll say 'at Doc 'll
git as good
Meals-vittles up, jes any day, as any *woman*
could!

XXVIII

Time Sister Abbick tuk so bad with striffen
 o' the lung,
 P'tracted Meetin', where she had jes shouted,
 prayed and sung
 All winter long, through snow and thaw,—
 when Sifers come, says he:
 "No, M'lissy; don't poke out your raw and
 cloven tongue at me!—"

XXIX

"I know, without no symptoms but them
injarubber-shoes
 You promised me to never putt a fool-foot in
 ner use
 At purril o' your life!" he said. "And I
 won't save you *now*,
 Unless—here on your dyin' bed—you con-
 secrate your vow!"

XXX

Without a-claimin' *any creed*, Doc's rail reli-
gious views
Nobody knows — ner got no *need* o' knowin'
whilse he choose
To be heerd not of man, ner raise no loud,
vainglorious prayers
In crowdid marts, er public ways, er — i jucks,
anywheres! —



XXXI

'Less 'n it *is* away deep down in his own
heart, at night,
Facin' the storm, when all the town 's a-sleep-
in' snug and tight—
Him splashin' hence from scenes o' pride and
sloth and gilded show,
To some pore sufferer's bedside o' anguish,
don't you know!

XXXII

Er maybe dead o' *winter*—makes no odds to
Doc, — he 's got
To face the weather ef it takes the hide off!
'cause he 'll not
Lie out o' goin' and p'tend he 's sick hisse'f
—like *some*
'At I could name 'at folks might send fer
and they 'd *never* come!



XXXIII

Like pore Phin Hoover — when he goes to
that last dance o' his!
That Chris'mus when his feet wuz froze — and
Doc saved all they is
Left of 'em — “ 'Nough,” as Phin say now,
“ to *track* me by, and be
A advertisement, anyhow, o' what Doc 's done
fer me! —

XXXIV

“ When *he* come — knife-and-saw ” — Phin say,
“ I knowed, ef I 'd the spunk,
'At Doc 'ud fix me up *some* way, ef nothin'
but my *trunk*
Wuz left, he 'd fasten *casters* in, and have
me, spick-and-span,
A-skootin' round the streets ag'in as spry as
any man ! ”

XXXV

Doc sees a patient 's *got* to quit — he 'll ease
him down serene
As dozin' off to sleep, and yit not dope him
with mor-*phoen*.—
He won't tell *what*—jes 'lows 'at he has "airn't
the right to sing
'O grave, where is thy victory! O death,
where is thy sting!'"

XXXVI

And, mind ye now!—it 's not in scoff and
scorn, by long degree,
'At Doc gits things like that-un off: it 's jes
his *shority*
And total faith in Life to Come,—w'y, "from
that *Land o' Bliss*,"
He says, "we 'll haf to chuckle some, a-lookin'
back at this!"



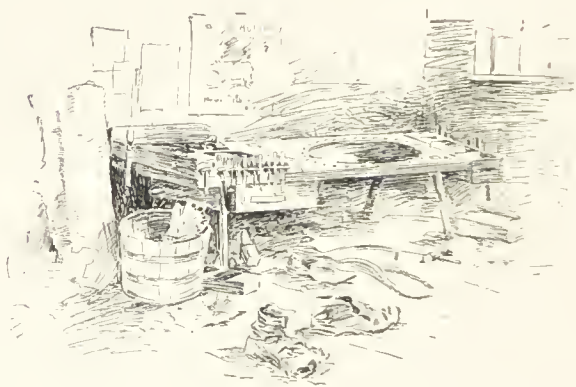


XXXVII

And, still in p'int, I mind, one *night o' 'niti-*
ation at
 Some secert lodge, 'at Doc set right down on
 'em, square and flat,
 When they mixed up some Scriptur' and wuz
funnin'-like — w'y, he
 Lit in 'em with a rep'imand 'at ripped 'em,
 A to Z!

XXXVIII

And onc't — when ginal loafin'-place wuz
old Shoe-Shop — and all
The gang 'ud git in there and brace their
backs ag'inst the wall
And *settle* questions that had went onsettled
long enough,—
Like “wuz no Heav'n — ner no torment” —
jes talkin' awful rough!



XXXIX

There wuz Sloke Haines and old Ike Knight
and Coonrod Simmes—all three
Ag'inst the Bible and the Light, and scoutin'
Deity.

“*Science*,” says Ike, “it *dimonstrates*—it
takes nobody’s word—
Scriptur’ er not,—it *’vestigates* of sich things
could occurred!”

XL

Well, Doc he heerd this,—he ’d drapped in
a minute, fer to git
A tore-off heel pegged on agin,—and, as he
stood on it
And stomped and grinned, he says to Ike,
“I s’pose now, purty soon
Some lightnin’-bug, indignant-like, ’ll ‘vesti-
gate’ the moon!

XLI

“No, Ike,” says Doc, “this world hain’t saw
no brains like yourn and mine
With sense enough to grasp a law ’at takes a
brain divine.—
I ’ve bared the thoughts of brains in doubt,
and felt their finest pulse,—
And mortal brains jes won’t turn out omni-
potent results!”

XLII

And Doc he ’s got respects to spare the *rich*
as well as *poor* —
Says he, “I ’d turn no *millionaire* onsheltered
from my door.” —
Says he, “What ’s wealth to him in quest o’
honest friends to back
And love him fer *hissel’f*? — not jes because
he ’s made his jack!”





XLIII

And childern.— *Childern?* Lawzy-day! Doc
worships 'em! — You call
 Round at his house and *ast* 'em! — they 're
a-swarmin' there — that 's all! —
 They 're in his *Lib'ry* — in best room — in
 kitchen — fur and near, —
 In office too, and, I p'sume, his operatin'-
 cheer!

XLIV

You know they 's men 'at *bees* won't sting?—
 They 's plaguey *few*, — but Doc
 He 's one o' *them*. — And same, i jing! with
childern; — they jes flock
 Round Sifers *natchurl!* — in his lap, and in
 his pockets, too,
 And in his old fur mitts and cap, and *heart* as
 warm and true!

XLV

It 's cur'ous, too, — 'cause Doc hain't got no
 childern of his own —
 'Ceptin' the ones he 's tuk and brought up,
 'at 's bin left alone
 And orphans when their father died, er mo-
 ther, — and Doc he
 Has he'pped their dyin' satisfied. — “The child
 shall live with me





XLVI

“And Winniferd, my wife,” he ’d say, and
stop right there, and cle’r
His th’oat, and go on thinkin’ way *some* mo-
ther-hearts down here
Can’t never feel *their own* babe’s face a-pressin’
’em, ner make
Their naked breasts a restin’-place fer any
baby’s sake.

XLVII

Doc's *Lib'ry* — as he calls it,—well, they 's
ha'f-a-dozen she'ves
Jam-full o' books—I could n't tell *how* many
—count yourse'ves!
One whole she'f's Works on Medicine! and
most the rest 's about
First Settlement, and Indians in here,—'fore
we driv 'em out.—

XLVIII

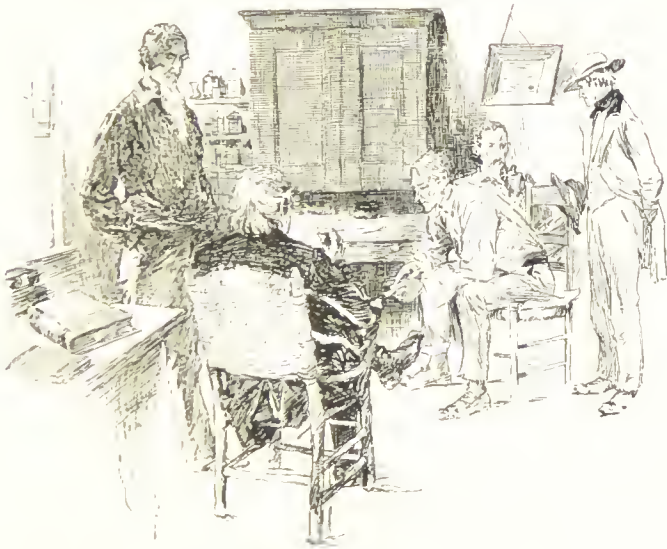
And Plutarch's Lives — and life also o' Dan'el
Boone, and this-
Here Mungo Park, and Adam Poe — jes all
the *lives* they is!
And Doc 's got all the *novels* out,—by Scott
and Dickison
And Cooper.— And, I make no doubt, he 's
read 'em ever' one!



Doc's Lib'ry

XLIX

One't, in his office, settin' there, with crowd
o' eight er nine
Old neighbors with the time to spare, and
Doc a-feelin' fine,
A man rid up from Rollins, jes fer Doc to
write him out
Some blame p'scription — done, I guess, in
minute, nigh about.—



L

And *I* says, "Doc, you 'pear so spry, jes
write me that recei't
You have fer bein' *happy* by,—fer that 'u'd
shorely beat
Your *medicine!*" says I.—And quick as *s'cat!*
Doc turned and writ
And handed me: "Go he'p the sick, and putt
your heart in it."

LI

And then, "A-talkin' furder 'bout that line
o' thought," says he,
"Ef we 'll jes do the work cut out and give'
to you and me,
We 'll lack no joy, ner appetite, ner all we 'd
ort to eat,
And 'sleep like childern ever' night—as puore
and ca'm and sweet."

LII

Doc *has* bin 'cused o' *offishness* and lack o'
talkin' free

And extry friendly; but he says, "I 'm 'fear'd
o' talk," says he,—

"I 've got," he says, "a natchurl turn fer talk-
in' fit to kill.—

The best and hardest thing to learn is trick
o' keepin' still."

LIII

Doc *kin* smoke, and I s'pose he *might* drink
licker—jes fer fun.

He says, "*You* smoke, *you* drink all right; but
I don't—neether one"—

Says, "I *like* whiskey—'good old rye'—but
like it in its place,

Like that-air warter in your eye, er nose there
on your face."

LIV

Doc 's bound to have his joke! The day he
got that off on me
I jes had sold a load o' hay at "Scofield's
Livery,"
And tolled Doc in the shed they kep' the
hears't in, where I 'd hid
The stuff 'at got me "out o' step," as Sifers
said it did.

LV

Doc hain't, to say, no "*rollin' stone*," and yit he
hain't no hand
Fer '*cumulatin'*.—*Home* 's his own, and scrap
o' farmin'-land—
Enough to keep him out the way when folks
is tuk down sick
The suddentest—'most any day they want him
'special quick.



LVI

And yit Doc loves his practice; ner don't, wil-
ful, want to slight
No call — no matter who — how fur away — er
day er night.—
He loves his work — he loves his friends —
June, Winter, Fall, and Spring:
His *lovin'* — facts is — never ends; he loves jes
*ever'*thing. . . .

LVII

'Cept — *keepin'* books. He never sets down no
accounts. — He hates,
The worst of all, collectin' debts — the worst,
the more he waits. —
I 've knowed him, when at last he *had* to dun
a man, to end
By makin' him a loan — and mad he had n't
more to lend.

LVIII

When Pence's Drug Store ust to be in full
blast, they wuz some
Doc's patients got things frekantly there,
charged to him, i gum!—
Doc run a bill there, don't you know, and allus
when he squared,
He never questioned nothin',—so he had his
feelin's spared.

LIX

Now sich as that, I hold and claim, hain't
'*scusable*—it 's not
Perfessional!—It 's jes a shame 'at Doc his-
se'f hain't got
No better *business*-sense! That 's why lots 'd
respect him more,
And not give him the clean go-by fer *other*
doctors. Shore!



LX

This-here Doc *Glenn*, fer instance; er this little
jack-leg *Hall*;—

They 're *business*—folks respects 'em fer their
business more 'n all

They ever knowed, er ever *will*, 'bout *medi-*
cine.—Yit they

Collect their money, k-yore er kill.—They 're
business, anyway!



LXI

You ast Jake Dunn;—he 's worked it out in
figgers.—He kin show
Stastistics how Doc 's airnt about *thrice* fortunes
 in a row,—
 Ever' ten-year' hand-runnin' straight—*thrice*
 of 'em—*thirty* year'
 'At Jake kin count and 'lucidate o' Sifers'
 practice here.

LXII

Yit—"Praise the Lord," says Doc, "we 've
 got our little home!" says he—
 "(It 's raily *Winniferd's*, but what she owns,
 she sheers with me.)
 We' got our little gyarden-spot, and peach-
 and apple-trees,
 And stable, too, and chicken-lot, and eighteen
 hive' o' bees."



LXIII

You call it anything you please, but it 's
witchcraft—the power
 'At Sifers has o' handlin' bees!—He 'll watch
 'em by the hour—
 Mix right amongst 'em, mad and hot and
 swarmin'!—yit they won't
 Sting *him*, er *want* to—'pear to not,—at least
 I know they *don't*.

LXIV

With *me* and bees they 's no *p'tense* o' social-
 bility—
 A dad-burn bee 'u'd climb a fence to git a
 whack at *me!*
 I s'pose no thing 'at 's *got* a sting is railyly
 satisfied
 It 's *sharp* enough, ontel, i jing! he 's honed
 it on my hide!

LXV

And Doc he 's allus had a knack *inventin'*
things.— Dee-vised
A windlass wound its own se'f back as it run
down: and s'prised
Their new hired girl with *clothes-line*, too, and
clothes-pins, all in *one*:
Purt'-nigh all left fer *her* to do wuz git her
primpin' done!

LXVI

And onc't, I mind, in airy Spring, and tappin'
sugar-trees,
Doc made a dad-burn little thing to sharpen
spiles with — these-
Here wood'-spouts 'at the peth 's punched out,
and driv' in where they bore
The auger-holes. He sharpened 'bout *a mil-*
lion spiles er more!





LXVII

And Doc 's the first man ever swung a *bucket*
on a tree
Instid o' *troughs*; and first man brung *graincd*
sugar — so 's 'at he
Could use it fer his coffee, and fer cookin',
don't you know.—
Folks come clean up from Pleasantland 'fore
they 'd *believe* it, though!

LXVIII

And all Doc's stable-doors *on*locks and locks
 theirse'ves — and gates
The same way ; — all rigged up like clocks, with
 pulleys, wheels, and weights,—
So, 's Doc says, “drivin' *out*, er *in*, they 'll
 open; and they 'll *then*,
All quiet-like, shet up ag'in like little gentle-
 men !”

LXIX

And Doc 'ud made a mighty good *detective*.—
 Neighbors all
Will testify to *that* — er *could*, ef they wuz
 legal call:
His theories on any crime is worth your
 listenin' to.—
And he has hit 'em, many a time, 'long 'fore
 established true.



LXX

At this young druggist Wenfield Pence's trial
fer his life,
On *primy faishy* evidence o' pizonin' his
wife,
Doc's testimony saved and cle' red and 'quitted
him and freed
Him so 's he never even 'peared cog-*nizant*
of the deed!

LXXI

The facts wuz — Sifers testified,— at inquest he
had found
The stummick showed the woman *died* o'
pizon, but had downed
The dos't *herse'f*,— because *amount* and *cost*
o' drug employed
No *druggist* would, on *no* account, a-lavished
and distroyed!

LXXII

Doc tracked a blame-don burgler down, and
 nailed the scamp, to boot,
But told him ef he 'd leave the town he
 would n't prosecute.
He traced him by a tied-up thumb-print in
 fresh putty, where
Doc glazed it. Jes *that* 's how he come to
 track him to his lair!

LXXIII

Doc 's jes a *lectle* too inclined, *some* thinks,
 to overlook
The criminal and vicious kind we 'd ort to
 bring to book
And punish, 'thout no extry show o' *sympa-*
 thisin', where
They hain't showed none fer *us*, you know.
 But he takes issue there:





LXXIV

Doc argies 'at "The Red-eyed Law," as *he*
says, "ort to learn
To lay a mighty lecnient paw on deeds o' sich
concern
As only the Good Bein' knows the wherefore
of, and spreads
His hands above accused and sows His mer-
cies on their heads."

LXXV

Doc even holds 'at *murder* hain't no crime we
got a right
To *hang* a man fer — claims it 's *taint* o' *lu-*
nacy, er *quite*.—
“Hold *sich* a man responsibul fer murder,”
Doc says,—“then,
When *he* 's hung, where 's the rope to pull
them *sound-mind* jurymen?”

LXXVI

“It 's in a nutshell — *all* kin see,” says Doc,—
“it 's cle'r the *Law* 's
As ap' to err as you er me, and kill without
a cause :
The man most innocent o' sin *I* 've saw, er
'spect to see,
Wuz servin' a life-sentence in the peniten-
tchury.”



LXXVII

And Doc 's a whole hand at a *fire!*—directin'
how and where
To set your ladders, low er higher, and what
first duties air,—
Like formin' warter-bucket-line; and best man
in the town
To chop holes in old roofs, and mine defec-
tive chimblies down:

LXXVIII

Er durin' any public crowd, mass-meetin', er
big day,
Where ladies ort n't be allowed, as I 've heerd
Sifers say,—
When they 's a suddent rush somewhere, it 's
Doc's voice, ca'm and cle'r,
Says, "Fall back, men, and give her air!—
that 's all she 's faintin' fer."



LXXIX

The sorriest I ever feel fer Doc is when some
show
Er circus comes to town and he 'll not git a
chance to go.
'Cause he jes natchurly *d*elights in circuses—
clean down
From tumblers, in their spangled tights, to
trick-mule and Old Clown.

LXXX

And ever'body *knows* it, too, how Doc is,
thataway!

I mind a circus onc't come through — wuz
there myse'f that day.—

Ringmaster cracked his whip, you know, to
start the ridin'—when

In runs Old Clown and hollers "*Whoa!*—
Ladies and gentlemen

LXXXI

"Of this vast audience, I fain would make
inquiry cle'r,

And learn, find out, and ascertain—*Is Doctor
Sifers here?*"

And when some fool-voice bellers down:

"He is! He 's settin' in

Full view o' ye!" "*Then,*" says the Clown,

"*the circus may begin!*"

LXXXII

Doc 's got a *temper*; but, he says, he 's
 learnt it which is boss,
 Yit has to *watch* it, more er less. . . . I
 never seen him cross
 But onc't, enough to make him swear;—
 milch-cow stepped on his toe,
 And Doc ripped out "*I doggies!*"—There 's
 the only case I know.

LXXXIII

Doc says that 's what your temper 's fer—
 to hold back out o' view,
 And learn it never to occur on out ahead o'
you.—
 "*You lead the way,*" says Sifers—"git your
temper back in line—
 And *furdest* back the *best*, ef it 's as mean a
 one as mine!"



LXXXIV

He hates contentions — can't abide a wrangle
er dispute
O' any kind; and he 'ull slide out of a crowd
and skoot
Up some back-alley 'fore he 'll stand and
listen to a furse
When ary one 's got upper-hand and t' other
one 's got worse.

LXXXV

Doc says: "I 'spise, when pore and weak and
awk'ard talkers fails,
To see it 's them with hardest cheek and loud-
est mouth prevails.—
A' all-one-sided quarr'l 'll make me *biased*,
mighty near,—
'Cause ginerly the side I take 's the one I
never hear."

LXXXVI

What 'peals to Doc the most and best is
 "seein' folks *agreed*,
And takin' ekal interest and universal heed
O' ever'body *else's* words and idies—same as
 we
Wuz glad and chirpy as the birds—jes as
 we 'd *ort* to be!"

LXXXVII

And *paterotic!* Like to git Doc started, full
 and fair,
About the war, and why 't 'uz fit, and what
 wuz 'complished there;
"And who wuz *wrong*," says Doc, "er *right*,
 't 'uz waste o' blood and tears,
All prophesied in *Black* and *White* fer years
 and years and years!"



LXXXVIII

And then he 'll likely kind o' tetch on old John
Brown, and dwell
On what *his* warnin's wuz; and ketch his
breath and cough, and tell
On down to Lincoln's death. And *then*—
well, he jes chokes and quits
With "I must go now, gentlemen!" and grabs
his hat, and *gits!*

LXXXIX

Doc's own war-rickord wuz n't won so much
in line o' fight
As line o' work and nussin' done the wounded,
day and night.—
His wuz the hand, through dark and dawn, 'at
bound their wovnds, and laid
As soft as their own mother's on their for-
reds when they prayed. . . .

XC

His wuz the face they saw the first—all dim,
 but smilin' bright,
 As they come to and knowed the worst, yit
 saw the old *Red-White-*
And-Blue where Doc had fixed it where
 they 'd see it *wavin'* still,
 Out through the open tent-flap there, er
 'cros't the winder-sill.

XCI

And some 's a-limpin' round here yit—
 a-waitin' Last Review,—
 'U'd give the pensions 'at they git, and pawn
 their crutches, too,
 To he'p Doc out, ef he wuz pressed financial'—
 same as he
 Has *allus* he'pped them when distressed—ner
 never tuk a fee.





XCII

Doc never wuz much hand to pay attention
to *p'tence*

And fuss-and-feathers and display in men o'
prominence :

"A raily *great* man," Sifers 'lows, "is not the
out'ard dressed —

All uniform, salutes and bows, and swellin'
out his chest.

XCIII

“I *met* a great man onc’t,” Doc says, “and
shuk his hand,” says he,
“And *he* come ’bout in *one*, I guess, o’ dis-
app’intin’ *me*—
He talked so common-like, and brought his
mind so cle’r in view
And simple-like, I purt’-nigh thought, ‘*I ’m*
best man o’ the two!’”

XCIV

Yes-*sir!* Doc ’s got convictions and old-fash-
ioned kind o’ ways
And idies ’bout this glorious Land o’ Freedom ;
and he ’ll raise
His hat clean off, no matter where, jes ever’
time he sees
The Stars and Stripes a-floatin’ there and flap-
pin’ in the breeze.



XCV

And tunes like old "Red, White and Blue" 'll
fairly drive him wild,
Played on the brass band, marchin' through
the streets! Jes like a child
I've saw that man, his smile jes set, all kind o'
pale and white,
Bare-headed, and his eyes all wet, yit dancin'
with delight!

XCVI

And yit, that very man we see all trimbly,
pale and wann,
Give him a case o' *surgery*, we 'll see another
man! —
We 'll do the trimblin' then, and *we* 'll git
white around the gills —
He 'll show us *nerve* o' nerves, and he 'ull show
us *skill* o' skills!

XCVII

Then you could toot your horns and beat
your drums and bang your guns,
And wave your flags and march the street,
and charge, all Freedom's sons! —
And Sifers *then*, I bet my hat, 'u'd never flinch
a hair,
But, stiddy-handed, 'tend to that pore patient
layin' there.

XCVIII

And Sifers' *eye* 's as stiddy as that hand o'
his! — He 'll shoot
A' old-style rifle, like he has, and smallest
bore, to boot,
With any fancy rifles made to-day, er expert
shot
'At works at shootin' like a *trade* — and all
some of 'em 's got!



XCIX

Let 'em go right out in the *woods* with Doc,
and leave their "traps"
And blame glass-balls and queensware-goods,
and see how Sifers draps
A squirrel out the tallest tree.— And 'fore he
fires he 'll say
Jes where he 'll hit him — yes, sir-*cc!* And
he 's hit thataway!

C

Let 'em go out with him, i jucks! with fishin'-
pole and gun,—
And ekal chances, fish and ducks, and take
the *rain*, er *sun*,
Jes as it pours, er as it blinds the eye-sight;
then, I guess,
'At they 'd acknowledge, in their minds, their
disadvantages.

CI

And yit *he 'd* be the last man out to flop his
wings and crow
Insultin'-like, and strut about above his fallen
foe! —
No-*sir!* the hand 'at tuk the wind out o'
their sails 'ud be
The very first they grabbed, and grinned to
feel sich sympathy.

CII

Doc gits off now and then and takes a huntin'-
trip somewhere
'Bout Kankakee, up 'mongst the lakes—some-
times 'll drift round there
In his canoe a week er two; then paddle clean
on back
By way o' old Wabash and Blue, with fish—
all he kin pack,—



CIII

And wild ducks—some with feathers on 'em
yit, and stuffed with grass.
And neighbors—all knows he 's bin *gone*—
comes round and gits a bass—
A great big double-breasted “roek,” er “black,”
er maybe *pair*
Half fills a' ordinary eroek. . . . Doc's *fish* 'll
give out there

CIV

Long 'fore his *ducks!*—But folks 'll smile and
blandish him, and make
Him tell and *tell* things!—all the while enjoy
'em jes fer sake
O' pleasin' *him*; and then turn in and la'neh
him from the start
A-tellin' all the things ag'in they raily know
by heart.



CV

He 's jes a *child*, 's what Sifers is! And-
sir, I 'd ruther see
That happy, childish face o' his, and puore
simplicity,
Than any shape er style er plan o' mortals
otherwise —
With perfect faith in God and man a-shinin'
in his eyes.



TAMAM.



